

Body Issues in *Wonder Woman* 90-100 (1994-[1995](#)): Good Girls, Bad Girls, Macho Men

"...what Wonder Woman needs is a strong direction, a new creative team and a Hot Babe artist...female characters do not appeal to teenage boys fixated on muscles, gore and violence...5 steps for Hot Babe formula 1) a good name including dark or night, 2) visible power that doesn't deform, 3) attitude, 4) sexy tight costume, leather lycra, rubber thigh length boots, 5) artist who can draw sexy women, The writer is the least important element in any hot Book of the moment" ([David Sage](#) 29).

The quote above indicates why, in the early 1990s, sales of DC Comics flagship heroine Wonder Woman fell so low that the comic did not even make the top 100 for this was the era of the bad girl. Bad girls were violent, silicone-breasted, wasp-waisted and designed to appeal to a demographic which according to Dick Giordano DC Comics Vice Chairman was, "...between 17 and 26...over 90% of the time is male. His basic interest is fantasy..." ([Gregg McCue](#) 101). Bad girl heroines acted upon their own morality, were sexualised and extremely aggressive. Series such as *Glory* or *Lady Death* featured the protagonists in lingerie specials posed in impossible pornographic positions with orgasmic facial expressions, licking blood from swords. Such imagery had its detractors who declared that bad girl art was no more than a strategy to build a flamboyant portfolio. However, criticisms of the sexualized representations of bad girls were strenuously denied by their creators. Rob Liefeld, for instance, stated "Glory is a strong business woman and she likes to go out and have a good time...we're trying to make Glory more real" ([Rob Liefeld](#) 29). In the face of such cynical [competition](#), it was unsurprising that [the sales figures](#) in 1993 *Wonder Woman* [fell to an all-time low](#). The not entirely serious quote opening this chapter was from a letter in a comics 'zine but the writer did not realise that DC, with a keen eye to the boom in darker superheroes and bad girl comics, had already begun to revamp their three flagship characters, Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. For Wonder Woman fan favourites, William Messner-Loebs and Mike Deodato Junior were employed to update Diana, the Wonder Woman, from a worthy good girl into a kick-ass bad girl.

Wonder Woman #90-100 begins when Wonder Woman/ Diana loses her title to Artemis, the leader of the Bana-Mighdall Amazons. The Bana-Mighdall, are nomadic Amazons from Egypt who turned their backs on the Gods and are mortal. Recently the Bana-Mighdall made their home on Themyscira. Where previously they had been outcasts because they betrayed the Themysciran Amazons, Queen Hyppolita rewarded them with land and immortality when they fought alongside their sisters to defeat invading demons. In the opening of the story, Hyppolita proclaims a contest to reassign the title of Wonder Woman. Artemis, the leader of the European Amazons and passionately opposed to what she regards as the decadence of the Themysciran, wins the contest and goes into man's world as the new Wonder Woman. Once in man's world Artemis and Diana become enmeshed in a gang war in which both sides use meta-human mercenaries to gain the upper hand. However, Artemis' impatience and arrogance lead to her failure and death. Diana once again dons the Wonder Woman mantle in [volume 2](#), issue #100. It is the second half of this story in which Diana and Artemis come to terms with the constraints of man's world that this [paper](#) examines. The focus of the paper is in the representation of male and female bodies in man's world.

The paper compares gaze theory and a discursive analysis of the meta-human body in comics in which, I argue, gaze theory is limited by its cinematic and phallogocentric scope. *Wonder Woman* of the early 1990s is used as a case study because the sexualised representation of female characters demonstrates the limitations of a gaze compared with a discursive reading. The paper begins by summarising the main points of the debate deriving from feminist Laura Mulvey's work followed by an analysis of female bodies using gaze theory. However, gaze theory, as a cinematic based model does not work with comics form and reading practices. The remainder of the paper then demonstrates an alternative somatic approach accounting for male and female bodies within their cultural contexts, arguing that similar discourses disempower and objectify male and female bodies, although in different ways.

Representing women, the gaze and film theory

In this narrative Diana and Artemis's bodies were depicted in typical bad girl style with muscular bodies wearing scanty, fetishized clothing and striking soft core porn poses.

This might suggest an analysis using gaze theory. Gaze theory emerged as a lively debate instigated by [Laura Mulvey's](#) article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975)- which proposes that representations of women in classical Hollywood cinema contrived to disempower them by making them objects of desire. Using psychoanalytic theory deriving from the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, Mulvey proposed that in Classical Hollywood cinematic practices and audiences' spectatorship male/female representations formed a

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binary, male/active, female/passive. This binary derived from the pleasures invoked by the system of spectatorship in which the active male gaze inspected the passive female body:

The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (162).

The entrance of the woman freezes the narrative action so the camera may linger on her body in "moments of erotic contemplation" (163). There are therefore two gazes upon the woman: the extra-diegetic gaze of the male audience member which is funnelled through the diegetic gaze of the male characters, principally the protagonist in the film. The representation of the female body works either through fetishization of body parts or by the exaggeration of beauty. The fetishization of breasts, legs, lips, diminishes the threat of the female so that it becomes "reassuring rather than dangerous" (164).

Mulvey's feminist polemic was political. Its aim was to expose the cinematic strategies used to produce pleasure in the text through analysis and thereby destroy the pleasure of the image. Mulvey's work was criticised on many fronts, for instance, Steve Neale (1983) argued that the male body was just as objectified as the female body in certain genres such as the Western and the Sword and Sandals gladiator film where the hero might suffer body injury before beating his enemies. Kenneth MacKinnon (1999) also noted that male pinups were just as prevalent as female. There are also many more types of gendered gaze than that suggested by Mulvey. For instance that of the heterosexual female who yet enjoyed the contemplation of female beauty. Jackie Stacey (1995), for instance, made an empirical study of female audiences' enjoyment of female stars. To address the criticisms pointing out the concentration the male gaze did not account for female pleasure in the contemplation of the female body, Mulvey (1999) wrote a second piece and based her analysis on a passage from *Dual in the Sun* (1946) in which she suggested that women viewing the female body adopted a masculine gaze in a type of symbolic cross dressing. I have outlined a few of the main ideas surrounding Mulvey to show how her original thesis became central to the discussion of the female form in the past forty years. However, because of its influence Mulvey's notion of the gaze has dominated discussions of female representations since 1975 and the arguments have not moved beyond the truism that mass media tend to objectify and disempower women. Furthermore, such debates are based upon Freudian and Lacanian models of psychoanalysis. Both models are phallogocentric, conferring power on the positive aspect of the binary, the male. (Hélène Cixous 146-157) This does not acknowledge the dependence of the positive element, masculinity on the negative aspect, femininity for its cultural construction (Judith Butler 13-32).

Comics scholars have begun to use Mulvey's ideas to analyse the disempowerment of the strong female body in the superhero comic. Certainly it is not difficult to make a reading using gaze theory. As outlined above, bad girl comics were full of images where artists drew attention to sexy women through composition and the layout of the panels on the page. For instance, in the series under scrutiny, *Wonder Woman* Deodato Jnr. employs a number of compositional and diegetic strategies. First, compositional devices to fetishize breasts, hair, costumes and naked thighs. Artemis, for instance, is the counterpart bad girl to Diana. Her design, based upon Jim Lee's character Zealot from *Wildcats*, is tall, muscular and Spartan in appearance, her outfit echoing that of native Americans, a loincloth that barely covers her body. Her use of bow and arrow reflects native American weapons but is also a reference to her Moon Goddess huntress/ pastoral connotations. Her hair is red, sinuous and curls round her ankles. The length, however, is hardly practical for a warrior, its snake-like appearance is reminiscent of an Alphonse Mucha siren as it flattens the image into the panel frame for decorative effect especially in battle scenes. Using gaze theory as the basis one might argue that, when she enters man's world as Wonder Woman, Artemis is the typical man-hating, castrating woman who has little sympathy for men who bully women, but less for women who allow themselves to be beaten. In a reading using Mulvey, Artemis represents the unruly woman who must be punished and disempowered. [INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE] This can be demonstrated in Artemis's encounter with her PR company Meta-Promotions (Fig. 0-1) (Messner-Loebs and Deodato Jnr. 1994, 14). The fetishization of the female body is produced through the use of panels and the diegetic male gaze. Artemis's body is split up into three panels. The top two panels divide her body; the top panel shows her head, the middle panel her breasts in line with PR director, Danniell Brassalton's gaze. Danniell Brassalton explains 'We want to get your message out quickly, right?' making it clear to the reader that a significant aspect of the message is her body. In a psychoanalytic reading of this page, Artemis is an example of woman as bad thing, a castrating harpy. Using a Freudian perspective, Mulvey points out that a male's fears of castration by the female lead them to fetishize an element of the female body. Taking her argument from Sigmund Freud's essay on fetishism (1927), Mulvey suggests that fetishism allays fears of castration through the female breast as substitute for the penis. The elevation of the breasts to fetish objects, serves to allay male castration anxiety. Using this concept to analyse the panel it could be argued that the concentration on her breasts diminishes the threat of castration by; Artemis whose breasts are thus, "reassuring rather than dangerous" (Mulvey 1975, 164). Thus, through the symbolic breakup of her body into parts into three panels Artemis is disempowered.

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So it is clear that the images in this comic objectify female bodies but, in the context of production and reception why would they not? They are produced by young men who wish to make a name for themselves by producing desirable images for an audience very much like themselves. However, does such a reading explain the whole image and is Mulvey entirely appropriate to use in the analysis of comics given the differences between their form and readership? Mulvey's reading was based upon the cinematic apparatus, the moving image, spectator positions and the cinematic experience. The cinematic apparatus appeals to audiences' narcissism in their cathartic interaction with the narrative, particularly in the role of the protagonist who is the equivalent of the ideal ego. Furthermore, the narrative reproduces the conditions of the peeping Tom gazing onto a narrative that seems entirely oblivious to their voyeurism in a darkened room. However, film works through the use of 24 frames per second to produce a spatial/temporal effect, and uses movement and sound to progress the action. This, argues Mulvey, is crucial to the experience of male spectator for the freezing the action enables the erotic contemplation of the female body. Indeed she notes, "...this complex interaction of looks is specific to film" (166). Unless the audience is experiencing the film through a DVD which can be replayed and frozen, the female image is captured within the moment dictated by the cinematographer or the director, not the audience.

However, overlooking Mulvey's own admission of the specificity of the filmic gaze, where can connections be made between film and comics? Film and comics have often been connected through the similarities of their descriptive language. However, narrative time is structured differently in comics as noted by [Scott McCloud](#) (94-95). The organisation of the panel within the page, the speech bubbles, comics devices and juxtaposition between panels all attempt to direct the reader to follow the story in a specific order and hierarchy. The action of the narrative can be slowed down or quickened by the panel's size. However although the writer and artist can attempt to control the pace and direction of readership, they cannot constrain a reader to follow this structure. A splash page, for instance, might arguably slow down the action for erotic contemplation where a reader might gain pleasure from gazing on a beautiful woman's body, but the comics reader can also go back, reread any passages [where](#) they want to remind themselves of the action or skip pages. The repetition of panels can also add to the understanding and coherence of the narrative. This is described by [Thierry Groensteen](#) as *tressage* (174), or the interweaving of repeating panels or themes in a comic, a concept used in a comparison between female and male bodies later in the paper.

One instance where comics and film share similarities is in their production. The comic, like the film, is not the vision of a single individual but produced through a working relationship of writer, artist, letterer, colourist etc. When Deodato Jnr. began work on Wonder Woman, he understood little English and was allowed to render the human body with relative autonomy¹ and this produced a comic with a dislocation between narrative and image. Where Deodato Jnr. presents metahuman bodies as beautiful objects, Messner-Loebs narrative constructs the body through consumer and Classical Greek discourse. Therefore, using gaze theory alone cannot address issues of the body in this comic. In the remainder of the paper I want to suggest an alternative approach to analysing gender in comics; to make a reading of the cultural construction of the body in the bad girl comic. Drawing on Heinecken's study of warrior women in television and [Bryan Turner's](#) notion of the somatic society, my aim is to demonstrate how a subgenre as two dimensional as the bad girl comic, when stripped (so as to speak) of its sexualised focus, can provide some interesting insights into culture and history in a specific era.

Somatic Discourse and Popular Culture

Contemporary culture is replete with images of the body in popular culture, yet paradoxically Western culture continuously rejects the importance of the materiality of the body in constructing the self. We only acknowledge our body through its shortcomings, disease, deformity, aberrations. The responsibility for this disregard is assumed to be Cartesian philosophy as, since the seventeenth century, it has promoted the importance of the mind over the body in identity construction. [Drew Leder](#), for instance, suggests dualism's insistence on the self as "an immortal mind trapped inside an alien body" (3) contributes to our lack of consideration of our bodies as contributing to our sense of being. The body in culture can be regarded as both "product and process" ([Anne Basalmo](#) 3). The body is a product because of its material presence in the world which we recognise through gender, racial and ethnic amongst other characteristics. It is a product of culture which constructs a collective understanding of what we are by our bodies. [Dawn Heinecken](#) deliberates on this notion in her analysis of strong female characters emerging in television fantasy series of the early 1990s. In her analysis of bodies in series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Aeon Flux* and *La Femme Nikita* [Heinecken](#) reflects upon the ways characters negotiated suffering in their heroic struggles. She concludes that suffering is expressed through the body in male heroes whereas it is endured through mental and emotional relationships

¹ Email communication with Mike Deodato Jnr. 23/12/2009.

with heroines. [HeinekenHeinecken](#)'s notion that body discourses constructed the representations informed her methodology which included analyses of cross media narratives.

The material body is constructed through culture and this impacts [on how](#) a discursive somatic analysis [can be produced](#). Where previous body discourses emphasised the body as a site of self discipline to control bodies' desires in the service of religion, contemporary bodies are controlled in the service of consumerism. Control and discipline is at the heart of modern bodily discourse to manipulate and reform the body shape and presentation. In the late 1980s body culture and representations in the media began to essentialize gender characteristics. Mens' bodies became harder and hypermuscular, womens' bodies became sexualised with large breasts and small waists. [Jeffrey](#) Brown (2004) notes how a significant number of tough women in action movies (Angelina Jolie, Linda Hamilton, Pamela Anderson) posed for *Playboy* magazine, thus conflating the boundaries between acting and pornography (64). Action and pop stars demonstrated the plasticity of body shape through a combination of exercise and surgical intervention. Linda Hamilton, John Travolta and Madonna, for instance used the gym to remould their bodies for acting roles in *T2*, *Staying Alive* and *Evita*. Angelina Jolie and Pamela Anderson's forays into plastic surgery to enhance their natural assets are well known and merely reflected a trend in society. [Susan](#) Bordo notes that in 1989 there were 681,000 surgical procedures on 18-35 year olds (336).

In the remainder of the paper I examine one aspect of the ways metahuman bodies act as metaphors for the somatic society of the early 1990s, first analysing female body then male body representations within consumerism which, I argue, is the controlling factor in body discourses in this comic.

Consumerism and the Female Body in Man's World

Once in man's world, Artemis and Diana become subjects of consumerism and capitalism, and this drives the narrative from this point (Fig. 0-2). [INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE] Sporting a short haircut, Diana changes her costume from star spangled primary colours into fetish/bondage gear designed by Brian Bolland as described in the letter pages of *Wonder Woman*, "from bits and pieces of current fashion" (#97 24). A pair of tight fitting cycle shorts, a bra, bolero jacket and short boots finish off her outfit which drew a backhanded compliment from a female correspondent in the letter column, "I *like* the biker pants. They are bound to be a relief from the high-thigh cut of her old costume, especially when kicking someone as she did on page 19 [of issue 95]" (Messner-Loebs and Deodato Jnr. 1995e, 31). Diana also has to make money. Where she previously worked in a fast food outlet, now she becomes a business woman as a partner of Micah Rains's detective agency. Artemis, however, naive in the ways of consumerism and man's world, sells her skills to a shady PR company. Here I want to return to the image first analysed through Mulvey's work where Artemis meets her PR executives Danial and Dickie Brassalton but this time using an overview of the body within consumerism. A somatic analysis examines the body within the whole page rather than part of the page (Messner-Loebs, and Deodato Jnr., 1995a, 14). (Fig. 0-3). [INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

A top wide, shallow panel depicts the New York skyline in silhouette. The Twin Towers, bastions of consumer culture in this era, are placed at the top centre of the entire page demonstrating the importance of capitalism over everyone living within their jurisdiction. In the long panel spanning the left hand side of the page, Artemis's whole body is shown as she gazes on the city. Her hair entwines around her legs and body like a golden snake. Artemis's body is subjected to the inter-diegetic gaze of the Brassalton brothers. Where the brothers suggest she has to get her message out quickly her message clearly is for them to sell her body. The introduction of the card into this panel is the token of her subjugation to capitalism.

Conversely Diana's body is never subjected to this treatment in man's world. The reader is introduced to her encounter with consumerism when she saves her partner, detective Micah Rains from torture (Fig. 0-4). [INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE] This scene begins in an ironic manner with a television screen showing Artemis pledging an end to violence in man's world. Micah's blood spattering across the television screen in the next panel puts a lie to Artemis's assertion. Diana interrupts Micah's torture by two thugs. However, when one of the thugs states that she won't attack them, 'That would be revenge. She don't believe in revenge' (Messner-Loebs, and Deodato Jnr., 1995a, 18). Diana proceeds to disabuse him of this notion, [stating, "Somehow you have gotten the wrong idea about me. I should correct that!"](#). [She proceeds to beat him up before rescuing her partner.](#) Leading Micah away, Diana lays the law of how their relationship will work, 'We will not be called 'The Wonder Woman Agency' or anything foolish like that...Any questions?' to which Micah's response, 'But I'm still in charge, right?' is belied by his body slumping against Diana's taller stronger body and assertive manner.

These two sequences compare the disempowerment of Artemis with the more knowing approach of Diana, by now well versed in the ways of patriarchy. However, they show that whether powered or disempowered, the body is always subject to capitalism. Where Mulvey contends that women are objectified by patriarchal domination, I want now to show how the male body is just as disempowered by capitalism.

Consumerism and the male body

Where female bodies in the early 1990s are represented as grotesque through hypersexualisation, masculine power is demonstrated through bulk and hypermusculature. In comics a new company, Image, formed by disaffected writers and artists in the early 1990s and they focused on hypermasculine representations of superheroes with huge bodies and pin heads. In *Wonder Woman* Deodato Jnr. represented male antagonists in a similar manner. In this section two examples of the spectacular display of male antagonists' bodies and their discursive constructions are discussed to show their disempowerment through capitalism, for all of these antagonists sold their bodies to achieve power or wealth.

The first examples are transformation through magic in the numerous man mountains sent by the White Magician to battle Artemis and in the transformation of the White Magician (AKA Asquith Randolph) into a demon. The second example of transformation is in the technologically constructed bodies of Moot and Geoff, two cyborgs employed by Juliana Swarza to threaten her gangland rivals. Both types of transformation potentially disempower the body through spectacle, consumerism and the cultural and symbolic connotations of power inferred by magical and scientific transformation.

Artemis encounters a series of hypermuscular male antagonists paid by Meta-Promotions to take a dive in battle and make her look good. Male antagonists consist of those transformed by the magic of the White Magician (The Chauvinist (Messner-Loebs and Deodato Jnr.,1995b), The Exploiter (Messner-Loebs and Deodato Jnr.,1995c) and Involute the Conqueror (Messner-Loebs and Deodato Jnr.,1995d) and Geoff (Messner-Loebs and Deodato Jnr.,1995c)) [INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE]. They epitomise notions of performative identity for they act with extreme aggression shown in their speech bubbles which embolden and exaggerate their names. More significantly all three are actors, hired to convince Artemis she can make a difference in man's world. Using Groensteen's notion of *tressage* in which panels are linked throughout the comic in a continuous or discontinuous series (174), the actors can be connected through their appearance and their entry into the narrative through the panel. The Chauvinist attacks a Woman's Refuge for battered wives, The Exploiter keeps a sweatshop full of illegal immigrants and Involute the Conqueror destroys the rainforest. All of these individuals look alike – they dwarf Artemis with their bulk and musculature even though she is over six feet tall. Their costumes are typical of the action hero (Rambo, John McClane) outfit and consist of black or grey sweatshirts, chains, jeans and gun belts. They are also stupid, for instance, The Chauvinist – 'left his card...and the name of his agent at the women's center' he was attacking. Diana finds Bill Baker, AKA The Chauvinist on a film set (Fig. 0-6). [INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE] Bill is under the illusion that he was acting a part and informs her that his and his fellow actors' musculature is enhanced by magic, "Man, what a deal! No sweat, no steroids, just this snooty guy in white chanting a mantra! And I'm buffed for life" (Messner-Loebs and Deodato Jnr.,1995e,15).

The male antagonists' bodies are disempowered in two ways through this use of magic. Historically masculine musculature is developed in pre industrial age by hard work on the land. However, according to [Alan M. Klein \(1993\)](#), in contemporary culture musculature is effected by leisure and consumer discourses. Muscles are necessary to define masculinity but through labour and hard work. The antagonists in *Wonder Woman* develop their bodies through magic which acts in a similar transformative manner to plastic surgery and the gym. Within contemporary culture as noted above, the body is a consuming and consumed phenomenon, that must be constructed to hail a slim, toned, healthy norm. Men can bulk out to conform to a notion of a masculine size. In this case Deodato exaggerates this bulk in keeping with the bad girl genre but also through the influence of Jim Lee's work at Image. However, as Fussell (1991) successfully argues, the male pursuit of instant or leisure musculature weakens the symbolic aspect of masculinity as it infers narcissism. This self love is echoed in Bill Baker /The Chauvinist's continuous reference to his acting career, his delusion that Diana enjoyed his performance and his striking a pose to show off his physique. The panel underpins other panels on the page and the Chauvinist's body dominates the space. As he is depicted as much taller than Diana, the top two right panels are split in Diana and the Chauvinist's conversation. Nevertheless, his head is much bigger than Diana's. The biggest panel on the page in which Bill Baker displays his body mirrors earlier panels showing antagonists attacking Artemis and Diana. That Diana cannot tell the difference between Bill and his fellow actors is shown when she asks whether he also played Involute the Conqueror, to which he replies, "No, but I read for it!" This type of repetition which Groensteen describes as braiding, holds the narrative together. It also acts to make the antagonists indistinguishable one from the other.

Antagonists' spectacular body display is also depicted in the representation of scientifically enhanced male bodies of Moot and Geoff ([Messner-Loebs and Deodato Jnr.,1994, 4](#)) (Fig. 0-7). [INSERT FIGURE 7 HERE] The scene begins on page 3 when Juliana Swarza, who trying to take over the Boston gangs is apparently caught off guard in bed by three mercenaries, The Morgue, Backblast and Ripsaw hired by rival gang boss, Paulie Longo. A potential rape scene is represented in the splash panel with all three characters surrounding her bed

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and Juliana's pose is that of the porn actress, kneeling with her back arched to exaggerate the size of her breasts. However, Juliana's proposal that her potential attackers join her belies her inferred disempowerment for when the page is turned her attackers are faced with two hulking cyborgs, Moot and Geoff. Moot and Geoff's bodies take up 2/3 of the frame and they are rendered by Deodato with a gleeful exuberance in the complexity of their construction. Their heads are the only noticeable human part of their bodies which are metallic and weighed down by weapons. Ripsaw's lifeless hand dropping his gun also draws the eye towards Juliana, Moot and Geoff. Colour and excessively elaborate drawing of monotone cybernetic technology focus the eye on the simplicity of Juliana lit up to the left centre of the image, the bed acting as a frame for her body (Fig. 0-7). Moot and Geoff, like their magically enhanced brothers, exemplify the grotesque body in which, "Exaggeration, hyperbolism and excessiveness are all considered fundamental attributes..." (Mikhail Bakhtin 303). The hyperbole in these representations is symptomatic of the excess of the grotesque. But there are two other fundamental issues relating to the grotesque in these representations. The antagonists are mocked for their stupidity but they also connote the body that, lacking control, extends and transgresses its boundaries and the boundaries of the frame. However, within the discussion of the somatic body, the body formed within culture, this excess demonstrates lack of control, a lack of boundary between the body and the world.

Manipulation of the body whether through science or magic enables the body to be modified and packaged in a conformable shape according to the norms of society. Nowhere is this more evident than in the intersection of bodies and technology in man's world. Haraway (291-324) proposes a celebratory attitude to the cyborg as a liberating phenomenon enabling the creation of new identities unrestrained by either animal or machine categories. However, as Mark Oehlart (112-123) suggests, media representations of cyborgs tend to be rather less optimistic about their potential. Cyborgs can be berserkers like Wolverine or programmed to obey orders like *Robocop*. These two types of extreme cyborg behaviour are indicative in Moot and Geoff's programming and raise issues of Cartesian dualism.

Moot and Geoff, like the mercenaries transformed by magic, also connote weakness through their bodies' constructions symbolically and biologically. This is inferred from their description by Juliana, "Geoff is a biomechanical construct, stolen from Star Labs. He's programmed for ferocity and loyalty. Moot is very unstable". Moot's instability and Geoff's programming demonstrate they do not control their bodies. That their cyborg bodies are also extended and transformed using prosthetics and weaponry suggests their control is questionable given Simon J. Williams and Gilliam A. Bendelow's argument that technology challenges, "what the body is, who owns it and what it might become" (79).

Conclusion

It is a truism to propose that the superhuman body acts as a metaphor for the body within wider culture. Due to the constraints of space, this analysis was narrow in focus. However, the examples used should provide the beginning of a debate on the analysis of the superhuman body. My aim in this paper was to show how the bad girl genre may be exploitative and two dimensional in its rendering of female bodies but it raises much more interesting aspects of the body within its cultural context in a particular era. Gaze theory assumes a specific spectator position and it has difficulty in accounting for a myriad of such positions. By using a somatic discursive analysis the body can be analysed, as Balsamo notes, a product and a process. This locates the body within its cultural and historic contexts. Using an analysis based upon reading male and female metahuman bodies through a cultural lens, analogies be made between gendered identities in society in the 1990s, this storyline shows how submission and control at the heart of Moulton Marston's original concept of Wonder Woman are reinterpreted within this era. Such discourses depict disquiet over the body's plasticity and its potential to transcend its boundaries.

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